

PARADOX



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FANZINE

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PARADOX

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This issue was created with the help of a Mac Centris 610, running Quark XPress 3.1, and printed on an HP LaserJet 4M. This is a special issue dedicated to two state of gaming essays, "Static" and "Advantage". Do not be alarmed. Next issue we will return with contributed material that was not included in this issue because of space limitations.

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Special thanks to Brian (sorry bud), Vinson, Shauntay, Phil, Jon, Josh, Nick, Alex (you bastard), Tim Plackett (freakshow), Stockhausen, Harris, and all those at the Anvil office center, and everyone else who made this issue possible. 3DO's commercials are cool, but who's going to run out and buy a \$500, non-toy video game system? Ponder that one Hans.

Single issue price: \$1. Subscriptions: 6 issues for only \$5. That's a deal.

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WE FOUND OUT THAT A SECRET FACTORY IS MASS-PRODUCING The EDITORS' Welcome!

I think that fandom is the single greatest aspect of electronic gaming. Every time I send out an issue of Paradox, a sense of pride comes over me, and I'm pumped for the next issue. Paradox has taken some long spaces for a kind of editorial vacation. This usually happens when there's not much going on. It takes a big event to get us pumped again.

Last issue, it was the Nintendo advertorial "Smashing the Myth of Speed & Power" that appeared in every magazine (except Game Fan, so far). This issue it was the announcement of the new Nintendo 32-bit VR system. This got me to write the massive essay that appears in this issue.

With the SCES just a month away, electronic gaming is at a point where it must prove that it can go on successfully. We'll have to wait and see what happens in the coming months.

Please take some time to respond with your own ideas to the two essays that are contained within this issue. We'd like to hear your side of the story.

-Chris

All fifteen issues of Paradox so far have had some touch of humor in them. Even in the most serious article from the past issues of this fanzine lies a touch of humor, sarcasm, or satire. The work in this issue, however, at least in the articles I have written, has a touch of seriousness in it rarely seen in Paradox. It has come about for a good reason, however, as it is time for the editors of this fanzine to do what we do best: express our opinions - seriously.

You may find this issue of Paradox extreme, outrageous, or controversial, and that's just fine. What I hope it is for everyone, more than anything, is thought-provoking. In our essays on the state of gaming today, we hopefully have given you something to ponder. I felt it was time to get serious and really see why the video game industry is presently in a rut. Consequently, the comparison of the events leading up to the crash in 1984 to what is happening now in 1994 began, and this issue was born. I tried to present some real cutting edge material in my essay, without the humor and little frills found in other editorials, even some of my own.

It's time to get down and dirty kids; it's time to get serious: serious about video gaming, the problems currently living and breeding within it, and the hierarchy ruling over it. No articles about defecation or our girlfriends like in other fanzines. It's time to get serious, and Paradox number sixteen is just that, at least it was intended to be. Whether you change your mind, keep the same opinions, are completely close-minded, or learn; whether you like, dislike, love, or hate the writing, at least try to take into account what we say. That's all I have. Enjoy the issue.

-Jason

GET READING! Leonard Herman's book, *Phoenix (The Fall & Rise of Home Videogames)* is a self-published book that you can obtain for \$14 a copy (that includes postage and handling). It includes chapters on years up to 1993, Multimedia, and Virtual Reality. Support this amateur publisher by sending your cash. Besides, it's a great book.

MUSIC that inspired and helped create this issue: Matthew Sweet "Son of Altered Beast", Urge Overkill "Saturation", The Grays "Ro Sham Bo", Counting Crows "August and Everything After", Bad Religion "Recipe for Hate", Nirvana "Unplugged", REM "Document", Soundgarden "Superunkown", Material Issue "Freak City Soundtrack", and many others.

FAN FORUM

Politically Correct

Dear Gaming Enthusiasts of America,

My name is Thomas Shaner and I am interested in joining your group of riot gamers. I am also writing because of a problem in "Samurai Shodown". I was playing 'Samurai Shodown' with my brother when my brother brought up a startling point: "Did you ever realize that all the great players are from Japan and that the only U.S. player, Earthquake, is what Japan thinks of the U.S.; fat, lazy slobs who are easy to control." This really offended me that SNK would have the nerve to stereotype the U.S. in this way. I demand SNK remove Earthquake from 'Samurai Shodown' and replace him with a more well-rounded, muscle-bound character. I mean, this is the '90s, SNK should know better than to stereotype other people.

Thomas Shaner

(CJ - I printed this because it brings up a very good point. Should video games be politically correct? I think that the developers of Samurai Shodown have the right to create whatever kind of characters they want to, and should not have to worry about offending anyone. Video games are not an arena for being PC. And, your brother does not necessarily know that the creators put Earthquake in for the reason that he's easy to control. Should fighting games feature exclusively Asian characters? Personally, this letter has taken it waaay too far. I totally disagree with him. It's a game, not life. Anyone else care to respond?)

Manifest Destiny

Chris-

I must take exception to your "The Nintendo Manifesto" column.

First, you are quite wrong about the fact(?) that Nintendo tried to sneak in an ad looking like an article. Two rea-

Jag Box

CAPSULE REV's

CyberMorph - polygon space shooter; Looks plain, but plays very well; Grows on you over time. - OVERALL - 88%

Raiden - overhead shooter; arcade translation, very faithful; easy to beat. - OVERALL - 84%

Evolution:Dinodudes - puzzler; good graphics, equally nice music and sound effects, "Humans" on the Jag. - OVERALL - 84%

Trevor McFur in the Crescent Galaxy - side-shooter; great graphics, bad gameplay, sound, challenge, etc. - OVERALL - 25%

Tempest 2000 - unexplainable; great graphics, sound, music, voice, challenge; 100+ levels, fantastic! - OVERALL - 98%

Release dates as of 5-9-94:

Wolfenstein 3-D - June 16th

Doom. Kasumi Ninja, Red Line Racer - July

Aliens Vs. Predator - end of July

TIP OF THE MONTH:

Level Select - Tempest 2000

Press and hold 1, 4, 7 and the A button at title. Wait for "EXCELLENT" on the next screen.

Play the game, and press OPTION to skip levels. *(Tip provided by Michael Palisano of The Laser)*

sons: 1. the EGM I'm looking at says "ADVERTISEMENT" FOUR times on those two pages, on the top and bottom of each. It looks nothing like an EGM-style article.

Second, you say you'll trash your Genesis and buy every SNES game ever made if you see an action game on SNES move as fast as Sonic. Well, start unhooking that Gen and saving your cash, Chris, it's been done. Most recently is Super Metroid, which I know you have (still think it looks very 8-bit?).

Also, Bubsy, even though it sucked, moved as fast as Sonic.

Now, about this "arrogant attitude towards Sega." Hello!? How many YEARS now has Sega been running commercials which display and extremely arrogant attitude towards Nintendo? Do you forget so easily when your fave company doe the same thing? Gameboy owners as dogs? Blast Processing? Recycling Gameboys? I think it's about time that Nintendo defends itself from Sega's relentless barrage of attacks. I think Sega had this coming. For years Nintendo has been making commercials which showcase their GAMES, while Sega has concentrated on bashing the competition at every turn. In that contest, I have no problem with Nintendo's ad. I think the only people who will get upset about it are those with large system bias.

Mode 7 is not a buzzword. SNES actually has hardware programmed to fulfill the specific tasks of scaling and rotation. They chose to dub it Mode 7, and have been calling it that since before we even saw the system. On the other hand, the Genesis has been out for a couple of years before we ever heard of "Blast Processing", and Sega PR itself admits that it's just a media buzzword.

Finally, please don't respond to this letter by labeling me as SNES-biased. Others have already tried and failed. I own both systems and play them both. The fact is simple: Sega had it coming. Live with it. I for one put absolutely no credence in advertisements anyway. System specs and stats mean nothing to me - I can't even tell you what kind of processors the Gen or SNES have. I think this kind of arguing over which system is better based on stats is stupid. I judge a system solely on the games it plays-nothing more. I once read an article in which the writer bashes the SNES because it looks ugly! What does that mean? Who cares? Sega's commercials lost my respect for them as PR people, and now that Nintendo has joined the battle, some of my respect for them is lost as well. However, a lot of people make game decisions bad on what com-

mercials and ads tell them is better, and because of this fact, I can't fault Nintendo for wanting to re-claim some of the territory Sega took with their childish commercials.

Pat

P.S. What's your best time on Super Metroid? Mine is 3:33.

(CJ - What a letter, this is the kind of thing I wanted to stir up with "Nintendo Manifesto". You bring up many good points. Let's kick it off, shall we?

First off, you're right, it's an ad. But, at first glance, it looks like an article, whether or not it looks like EGM's style. And, I certainly don't put much weight on specs, graphics, or speed, but a lot of people do. Take all those people on Prodigy or any other on-line that debate systems just by specs. Of course they're blind, but they go for this stuff.

I bought Super Metroid, and yes, it's fast. It also has slowdown. It is NOT as fast as Sonic. Sonic is faster, longer, without slowdown. Bubsy may be fast, but again, Sonic is faster, longer. I can also get Bubsy on the Genesis, and it's even faster.

Nintendo has the right to do whatever they want, but notice: the Superior NES section, last point. The Super NES does NOT have 12 buttons, unless you count Up, Down, Left, and Right on the control pad as separate buttons, which they aren't. Besides, with Sega's six-button controller, it'd be the same number. Who cares which system is black? What difference? Which system has a more versatile controller in the "Q&A" section? That's an opinion, they're both versatile.

Here's the real question: "At what price graphics?" Like I pointed out in the article, and I point out in the essay in this issue, NBA Jam SNES is \$10 more than the Gen version, and the GEN version has a battery backup. You explain it...

Why advertise the SNES if you're still supporting the NES with new commercials, and hyping up the Project: Reality and this new 32-bit VR system? I've made my point.

Of course, Nintendo can definitely retaliate against Sega's ads. The TV Super Metroid ad proves that. It's very well done. Since I work at a video game retailer, I can say that this ad got some response, mostly NEGATIVE. The store I work at is also carrying less than 1/2 of all new SNES games, while we're carrying 3/4 or more of the new Genesis carts and Sega CD titles. SNES sales is really

hurting, I know this for a FACT.

By the way, my fastest Super Metroid time is 3:00 flat.)

MANIFESTATION

Yo Chris,

Prodigy junkie? Wrong person. That was Jan, my sister, over a year ago. I sign on to Prodigy about every other day to catch up on e-mail and new articles about games and write to people about Guru.

And THEN there was the interview. Do I believe anything this guy says? Yes. Do I believe everything he says? No. In my DEEPEST personal opinion on that subject, the Japan-based

Super Metroid

FASTEST TIMES

Chris Johnston, Naperville, IL - 3:00

Pat Reynolds, Grand Rapids, MI - 3:33

If you've got a fast time on Nintendo's Super Metroid, send it in and be included on our chart (proof may be required - picture, on request).

Nintendo is screwing with NOA's minds on fact and fiction. I just ask the questions, and he's not a Consumer Service Representative. I know better than to ask them for any help. Of all people, they are the last I'd go to. Don't get me wrong, Roger's spaced out and all, but you gotta love his attempts to advertise Nintendo.

The article "The Nintendo Manifesto" was interesting. Yep, you can bet your ass it was another Nintendo advertising scheme. As for saying they can put Sonic on the SNES and move just as fast, they were honest when they said they could. Look at Death Valley Rally for example. The Road Runner moves fast just like Sonic and it's also SORTA in the same genre as Sonic. It's all how the programmers program the game, not the speed of their pitiful processor or anything else. That you should give

them.

You touched on Nintendo's "Mode 7" and Sega's "Blast Processing" a little bit also. "Blast Processing" is TRULY a buzz term to make consumers believe the games are fast like Sonic. "Mode 7" is an actual video game technique which DOES exist. As a matter of fact, there IS a "Mode 5". There's also a "Mode 0, 1, 2, 3, 4, and 6." the technical differences between each mode is the amount of colors each one can display, and resolution sizes. Mode 6 is a simulated resolution mode, and Mode 7 is scaling and rotation mode. All other modes deal with backgrounds and sprites. "Mode 7" is somewhat of a buzz word, but in this case, it's a nickname for something that DOES exist...scaling and rotation. (Unlike "Blast Processing").

Signed,
Michael Hrusecky,
Editor,
Game Guru

(CJ - You're the only one who mentioned the existence of Mode 0-7. Actually, yes, I found this out AFTER the article was printed. I pulled out an old VG&CE, which had a great article explain the tech of the SNES. Very interesting indeed.

Death Valley Rally may be fast, I'll give you that. But again, not as fast as Sonic. And, it controls very badly. DVR is a game that doesn't fit in any one category. It's a puzzle - action - strategy - adventure game.

Don't tell me all of Nintendo's programmers sat around during the Sonic thing and said - "well we could make a game that fast, but hell, we just don't want to do that!" They were envious as all hell. But, if they knew they could do it since the SNES came out, why haven't they? I have yet to see a game that's that fast. Set 'em up side by side, you won't find ONE game.

Your interviews have got to ask not only questions, but some hard-hitting questions. It's obvious that your good questions are answered with "NO COMMENT". Then word them differently so you at least get AN answer out of him.)

JAG OWNERS, UNITE!

Chris,

Hey what's up? Sorry I haven't written anything lately, but with two tests a week, an essay every other week and a term paper to write, well, it's hard to do much else. However, I make time to do

other things like work and sleep. Seriously though, I LOVE my Jaguar! It's incredibly awesome! This is the system that will put away the rest! Although I am going to buy my SNES back for two reasons: Metroid, and Ranma 1/2 Super Battle so soon I'll be giving you more than just PC Engine reviews.

Speaking of reviews, your Tempest review was spectacular! If I didn't already own it I would've picked it up after reading. By the way, you're right, who needs Capcom or Konami when there are games like Tempest. Now for Checkered Flag 2, AVP and Wolfenstein!

Anyway, enclosed is a review of Fatal Fury 2 for the PC Engine Arcade Card. I hope you enjoy reading it, if you can read it, which by the way, I'm sorry about not having it typed, but I haven't had time to borrow a typewriter. So let me know what you think and soon I'll have reviews of Kabuki Den and the spectacular Y's IV.

Sincerely,
Michael Barnabee

(CJ - Sounds like you're busy Mike! The Jaguar is a great system, and Tempest is a great game. I'm still on level 61 - how far are you (that goes for any reader)? Super Metroid is intense, and I've heard from Pat Reynolds that Ramma Super Battle is also great. I may have to pick that one up.

Some Jag news to slip in this space for you Atari 64-bit owners. The Jag will probably be unleashed in July, with a national advertising campaign, demos, etc. More on that later.)

PAW FOR ONE AND ONE FOR PAW

Deer Creese (me spell good),

You've let me down man. Paradox #15 just didn't have enough Jaguar coverage! JAGJAGJAGJAGJAGJAGJAGJAGJAGJAGJAGJAGJAGJAGJAGJAG I played the Jaguar for the first time the day before I got Paradox. The game - Tempest 2000. The reaction - ADRENALINE!

I'm saving my pennies for the supreme cat, but still have a ways to go. Where were the reviews of CyberMorph, Raiden, Dino Dudes, etc.? Love that Shakespeare quote - I'll probably steal it for use in WZ unless you object.

The best article in #15 was the interview with Rich Wigstone. It broke the stereotype I had about SNES-only gamers (you know, the "Nintendo kills Sega any day," and "I'll buy anything if it says 'Nintendo' on it" crowd). He should be appointed the new president of Nintendo.

The "Eden in Arlington Heights" article is one I can relate to since we have our own version of it here: Player's

Choice! The guys that work there like video games one hundred times more than I do and were the ones who guided me to the greatness that is the Atari Jaguar.

Overall, Paradox #15 surpassed the previous issue. Keep up the good work and GIVE ME MORE JAGUAR!!!

Matthew Smith

(CJ - Yes, Tempest is THE game. If you want more Jaguar, check out our "Up-to-speed with the Atari Jaguar" box. We've got capsule reviews, updated release dates, and other info for you to check out. At a glance, get yourself up to date with the Jag. Oh yeah, you can use the quote if you really want to, but find another quote, there are tons. For instance U2's song "All I Want is You" has a verse that says "Harbor in the Tempest". There are others as well, look in a book of quotes.

The interview went over very well. It's a feature we'll be continuing - not only with fans but with other people as well. You'll have to wait and see...

If anyone else has a games store near them like Player's Choice or Die Hard in their area, please send it on in! We may be putting together a box of game stores across the country in the future.)

Send in your letters now for issue #17!

STATICS

by Jason Whitman

Could it be? Could the video game crash of 1984 be playing itself out again ten years later? Could the devastating results of such a crash cause the type of results that would provoke the entire industry to start over as it did with the introduction of the NES in 1985? At this moment in 1994, the answer seems to be yes. As unfortunate as it is, the entire market is weakening and consequently collapsing. This may be a bold statement, but the industry is becoming saturated with new systems, technology, rumors, vaporware, and magazines, and the consumers are seeing very little in terms of actual product. If this continues, the market will fold

and will be forced to start again. An even bolder question then arises; can the video game industry experience two major crashes in the same decade and survive?

The ironic part of this entire situation is that the one company in the industry, the strongest link after the crash in 1984, has become its weakest and most embarrassing link within the past few years. This company is Nintendo; once great, once exciting, at one time partially honest with the public. The introduction of the NES saved video gaming and set a standard for quality and playability for close to ten years. Great games, few gimmicks, few lies. This statement is unfortunately no longer true. Since the introduction of the Super NES,

Nintendo has resorted to low blows and lies to sell products, or more importantly, to prevent their competitors from selling products. Jokes such as the Super NES CD-Rom and the new Project Reality make Nintendo lose all credibility. The press release for the CD-Rom at the Summer CES two years ago was a very bad attempt to take the spotlight off the Sega CD, a system that was present at the show and was being focused on by the press and consumers. In a "surprise" move, Nintendo belted out a press release that stated that they too had a CD-Rom add-on in an attempt to divert attention away from the Sega booth. The same ploy is being perpetrated with the Project Reality. We see

more and more numbers but very little actual proof that the system actually exists, and it once again can be assumed that this is a blatant attempt to corrupt the success of the new powerhouse systems such as the Atari Jaguar and the 3DO. A once all-powerful company has resorted to such filthy tactics because they, as we do, realize that the Super NES is not powerful enough to last more than a few years. They may have such contraptions in development, but the rumors we hear and read are all bull; mere attempts to distract the public's attention from the new systems currently passing up the Super NES. Nintendo is treating this situation like a politician; tell the public what they want to hear and they'll support you. The only problem with this philosophy, however, is that when it comes time to deliver the goods, to fulfill the promises, Nintendo will leave the people empty handed as they have done before. This type of attitude will kill this once indestructible force and may spread to destroy the entire industry.

1993 was a very strong year for video gaming in general, but near the end of the year, many sensed that something was amiss. The Super NES had its games, as did the Genesis and the Sega CD, but the parent companies of these systems both announced in 1993 that they had new systems in development. Can you say saturation, manipulation, and exploitation? Can you say crash? We found out about the Saturn and the Project Reality, but we also found out about the Amiga 32, the Atari Jaguar, the Sony PSX, and the new TTI/NEC system. Too much to handle? Well, the same overloading continued in early 1994, with Sega's seemingly useless CDX, their Super 32X add-on, and Nintendo's 32-bit virtual reality system, a machine even the company itself is unable to describe, being announced. I'm not even sure I need to elaborate any further as to why this is a potential cause for a crash; too much, too quickly, way too soon? Definitely. Most of the systems available now have not even come close to reaching their full potential, yet they

are being replaced as quickly as new ones are being developed. The bottom line is, no matter how desperate people are for games, there is always a limit to how much they will buy. If this trend continues, and it doesn't look as if it is going to end anytime soon, consumers will just stop buying any product at all. A good portion are already confused as to what is good and bad currently, and the addition of four, five, or six new systems will only make matters worse. Another important point is that if the market continues to become more and more saturated with "new" technology, the manufacturers will lose the casual buyer, the impulsive buyer. If there are six choices instead of two, and four of the six cost over \$200, the mother, father, or grandmother looking to buy a gift for a child will just shake his or her head and buy something else, something less confusing and ultimately less expensive. If enough of this type of buyer, the buyer looking for a cool new "toy," walks away without purchasing anything, especially during the Christmas season, the result will be big losses for manufacturers. These losses result in bankruptcy, fallout, and a folding of the entire industry as a whole. No one, not a single company will survive, because video games will soon become the laughing stock of the toy industry, with high prices and too many choices causing the average consumer to turn elsewhere. Video game companies rely on these consumers for a good portion of their profits, and without them, not one company, not a single one, can survive.

This includes Sega as well. The modern video game king has its flaws just as Nintendo does, though they are not quite as noticeable. Sega's biggest problem is their ratings system. The same system that has gained so much media attention over the past year is a complete and utter joke. Sega has always been just as sly as Nintendo when it comes to marketing, but in a more subtle manner. This is seen clearly in what has become a silly attempt to please parents and conservative congressmen. While the ratings system in theory is

a great idea, the games Sega manufactures or allows to be released for their systems need to be graded with the same criteria. This is obviously not the case. Games Sega knows will be big sellers have not and will never be rated MA-17, because Sega realizes that the parents they are attempting to please are the same ones buying games for their kids. A parent who knows the different ratings may be reluctant to purchase a game intended for mature audiences over the age of seventeen for his or her twelve year old child, thus limiting the impulsive buyer mentioned before. Sega combats this with ease by merely not rating sure hits with the MA-17 rating. Games such as Mortal Kombat and Silpheed most likely should have been slapped with this rating, but Sega realized that these games would be big sellers and gave them a less severe rating (GA or MA-13) instead. Thus, the games sold, and the ratings system that was supposed to inform the uninformed parents did nothing more than lie to them. Silpheed's swear words do not belong in a game rated for general audiences, and Mortal Kombat's blood, hidden or not, was deserving of a MA-17 rating. Sega defeated their own ratings system to sell games, and it worked. A system intended to inform, protect, and assist did nothing. Nice little stickers on a box; that's all they are, stickers on a box that lie. A great idea that could have been implemented universally was killed by the company that created it in the pursuit of the almighty dollar. As Nintendo lost their credibility with exaggerated and at times false press releases, Sega lost theirs by lying on the packaging of their own products. Such a great idea, such terrible execution, such disgusting priorities.

What happens when the most intelligent magazine in the video game industry makes an attempt to be the most popular? It dies. This happened to Video Games and Computer Entertainment, which under the leadership of Katz, Kunkel, Worley, and Andy Eddy, was the best gaming magazine available in late 1992 and early 1993. The careers of

such outstanding journalists as Chris Bieniek, Zach Meston, and Josh Mandel began to blossom during this time, and VG&CE had the strongest staff of any gaming mag around. It did not have the circulation and flashiness of EGM, but it had the intelligent writing, in-depth reviews, and fandom coverage that real gamers could appreciate. But when LFP, the publisher of the former VG&CE, decided that it wanted to reach the success of EGM, the magazine died. Eddy, Katz, Kunkel, and Worley were history, and VG&CE became simply Video Games. The new mag made poor attempts at EGM fame with the fancy sidebars and cluttered hodge podge pages found in many European gaming magazines. The most enjoyable magazine available quickly became the least enjoyable in an attempt at fame and big success. This attempt obviously failed, and Video Games is now a below average mag with no real attractive qualities, all for a shot at the big time. Well, VG is no EGM, and gone are the in-depth reviews and intelligent writing. We are now subject to editor Chris Gore's capitalized headlines as we watch the brilliant writing of Bieniek, Meston, and Mandel be compromised by the short (oh, so short) reviews found in Video Games. Fandango made its return in the new VG, though compromised as well, and Bieniek's capsule reviews of fanzines will never match the reviews found in the former Fandango by Arnie Katz. VG gave up its identity to become great, but instead it became something mediocre, if even that. Is it greed? Difficult to say, but

it seems to me to be corporate power corrupting what is already good in an attempt to make it better. LFP brought in a new editor and a new look to make the magazine great, not realizing that it was already the best one available. Instead of greatness, however, VG found itself as something far from great. It has great writers, but in its current form, VG will never allow these writers to show their real talent again. These men, along with the magazine's readers, have been cheated in a futile attempt at success. This is yet another example of the warped priorities that will eventually kill each and every such greedy company or magazine willing to compromise its identity or integrity for a shot at the big money.

Is there a perfect way to conclude this article and solve all the problems in a snap? Probably not. The things destroying the video game industry today are similar to the things that destroyed the industry in 1984, and this of course is a bad omen. The saturation of gaming with new systems that are being released before their time, if not stopped abruptly, will kill the industry as a whole. There will be too many choices, with many high priced, for the average consumer to be actively involved in video gaming. The only real solution then is to convince companies through articles like this that their current systems still have a lot to offer, and by increasing the number of systems available, they will eventually confuse and alienate the normal game buyer that they depend on so greatly. Other problems such as the terribly false rumors and false advertising are much more

difficult to solve. This aspect of the problem needs to be solved by the consumers themselves. By being informed of what is what in the gaming world, one can get by and see past these things. By renting and borrowing, one can find out exactly what is and is not appropriate for whom. Often these things are not performed by those not considered "gamers," and this fact is a very unfortunate one. The loss of this group, as said before, will in itself injure the industry beyond repair, so once again, the cure is forced into the hands of the companies themselves. This naturally will solve no problems whatsoever. As long as companies are allowed to manipulate the public, they will do so; when the bottom line is making money, it is very easy to become corrupt. Who can clear the static? If the trends mentioned in this article continue, the consumers will do the clearing by buying nothing, thus finishing off the industry as a whole. But if real gamers, we gamers, can say something or take a stand, maybe company executives will listen. Honesty will work, current systems will work, and it can be done. The industry does not have to crash again. It's on its way, but it can be stopped, and it's up to us. Be informed, be knowledgeable, and most of all, inform others. We can clear the static. Gamers can clear the static for the average consumer by writing letters, supporting fandom, and being heard. The video game industry does not have to crash again.

ADVANTAGE

by Chris Johnston

A dark cloud came over the land, and all was dark. The evil emporer brought armies of destruction and captured and imprisoned all who opposed him. He stole the sacred emeralds, and with their powers, summoned all the forces of evil to the land. There was one, a young lad from the neighboring land, that found

his destiny to set out on a quest to vanquish the world from this evil...

Sounds like a story for a good RPG, doesn't it? This year is going to be a make-it or break-it season for the video game industry. It's play smart or die, and the video game industry is going in a 10-year cycle.

Why is a video game industry crash looming overhead? At a time when we've got titles like "Gunstar

Heroes" from Sega, and "Super Metroid" from Nintendo, you'd think the industry would be in better shape that it ever has been.

Look closer, and you'll find another side to the video game industry. It's the side that I really HATE to talk about, but it's a necessity.

Before Sega's Genesis picked up speed with the release of Sonic the Hedgehog, Nintendo never even

thought of competition with Sega. In Japan, Nintendo's sales shut out any competition except the PC Engine, with Sega a distant third.

But that is not the case in the U.S. Even if Nintendo doesn't need to compete in Japan, they need to in the U.S., and they realized that in 1993, when Sega had its best year ever, and Nintendo had their worst. Both companies toughened their advertising campaigns, brought out a lot of titles around Christmas, and bombarded the video gaming press with news on their "upcoming technology".

1993 was not so much a war over which system is better, it was which company will have the NEXT GREATEST THING.

Sega said, "VR". Nintendo countered by saying, "64-bit VR", and then everyone turned around and said, "Arcade translations" and "Interactive experiences".

Getting to my point, I think that the way we're heading now, there will be a complete shakedown of systems, magazines, and formats in the months to come and the loser(s) may never be heard from again.

Today I received a copy of TWICE, the magazine which cover the consumer electronics industry, and I was saddened and angry at what I saw. Nintendo, of all companies, is releasing a new system.

I thought to myself, 'then Project Reality is truly scrapped and Nintendo's got another total vaporware machine up their sleeves. It really doesn't exist it's only there to deter prospective 32-and-64-bit system buyers from buying another company's product.'

The story, for your information, is this:

"Nintendo to Bow 32-Bit Virtual Reality Vid Game... Nintendo will launch a new 32-bit game system early next year that will feature a virtual reality (VR) technology that does not require the use of special glasses, according to reports from Japan.

"The company said the new game, to be priced under \$200, will not affect the company's introduction later next year of the 64-bit Project Reality system it is developing with Silicon Graphics.

"At press time, details of the system were sketchy. For example, while Nintendo (Japan's) president Hiroshi Yamauchi was quoted as saying the system will not connect to a conventional TV, Nintendo executives here were not able to confirm that the system would use a color LCD screen

or other type of display.

"It is also unclear whether the system would be a set-top console or a much-awaited successor to Nintendo's portable Game Boy unit, or whether it would use the silicon cartridges Nintendo said it will employ with Project Reality.

"According to the reports, the unnamed game system is nearing the final stage of development and will be exhibited at a trade show in Japan in mid-November. Software for the system will be cheaper than current titles for Super NES and its Japanese counterpart, Super Famicom, the company said.

"Exactly what Nintendo means by 'virtual reality' is also open to speculation.

"Yamauchi was quoted as saying the system will allow players to become immersed in the game experience as opposed to just watching it. However, the system will not use the head-mounted displays common with most VR systems.

"Nintendo did say the VR technology has been developed in conjunction with a U.S. company.

"A Nintendo U.S. spokeswoman said information about the new system will be released to prospective licensees in June and adds that the difficulty in describing the system is because "it really has no precedent."

Well, I reacted with a confused "Huh?" What exactly is Nintendo doing here? Is this vaporware...again?

Not that I mind announcements of new systems, it's just that Nintendo does it two times every year, and so far, NONE of them have actually been released. Nintendo doesn't realize that they are putting themselves in serious danger when they announce this stuff.

I spoke with a Nintendo Rep the other day and he confirmed the report, saying that in fact there was a new system coming out, but that he did not know how it would affect the launch of the PR, if at all. He said that it would be a software-based machine, so cartridges are coming. Other than that, he was not able to answer any questions because, he "was not told any more that what I've told you."

First it was with Philips. Nintendo said that they would release a SNES CD-ROM system with Philips, and it would play CD-I games through a bridge format. Everyone talked about it. It was the "next thing". It would have made Nintendo a credible company,

because so many SNES owners wanted to see games on CD for their system.

People still have the perception today that Nintendo is bringing out a SNES CD drive, even though all arrows now point to no.

Then it was the Sony deal. This actually might have gone through, but it has not produced a CD-ROM drive for the SNES, or a new system, and Sony is now off producing the PS-X, a highly advanced system with a high price tag to boot. Nintendo's official reason why they nixed the Sony deal was that Sony inked a deal with Sega to make the Sega CD, and therefore Nintendo could never work with them.

Nintendo then announced that CD-ROM was not where they wanted to go. They signed a deal with Silicon Graphics and off they went. Who would've known that now it seems that this deal will also be demolished, revitalizing only Nintendo's coin-op division.

Nice try Nintendo. It almost worked. You are still advertising the SNES like crazy with an advertorial denouncing the Genesis and pumping up the SNES. With the release of Super Metroid, the most awaited 16-bit sequel in gaming history, I thought maybe you had turned around. But only four days after the release of Metroid, this news comes to my door.

Let's take a moment to analyze the situation. Nintendo announces a new, unnamed (as yet) system, it doesn't hook to a TV, it's VR without a head-mounted display, it's under \$200, and the cartridges will be cheaper than those that exist now. I think we've heard this before. I think it's also safe to say that since you 'can't describe it', it's another vaporware machine. In fact, this is a brand new low point. I hope it never goes lower than this.

Now of course there is a small possibility that they are telling the truth this time, and the new system is really cool and revolutionary, but I doubt it. In fact, I doubt I will ever believe another thing Nintendo says until they produce.

Nintendo is spreading themselves WAAAY too thin. When they've got too many systems out, it'll be an even harder decision for consumers. The NES/SNES decision was hard enough. You've got to develop games for the thing, and I wouldn't rely on Argonaut software to save you. Nintendo, at one time, released ten to fifteen titles a year. No more, those days are long gone, and it's a shame.

Where has Metroid been?

Getting back to the Project Reality system, is it really going to come out? Nothing I have heard has led me to believe that the system is going to make it out. The new Game Player's has a sidebar titled, "Licensees Ponder Project Reality". It's a rather interesting article. Of course, Nintendo announced that the PR will have 100 meg cartridges even before we've seen the system, or even concrete specs.

The article in GP's states that licensees are not hot after the PR because Nintendo may charge higher royalties in order for companies to produce games. Whereas a CD-based PR would have drastically reduced royalties, because CD's are so cheap to produce. I don't believe if Nintendo could come out with the PR that companies would be making games for it quick enough under current conditions. Nintendo doesn't have to pay royalties, they own a certain pile of silicon already. That's why you see a 24-meg Super Metroid with a battery back up for a \$59.99 list, and you see a 16-meg NBA Jam with a password and no battery from Acclaim for a \$69.99 list.

It's simple: the price of the NBA Jam cart for the Super NES is only \$20 less than the system itself, with other games like Star Trek: TNG retailing for \$75, only \$15 away from the system's price. The reason we don't see EA Sports' SNES games with battery saves is that Nintendo owns the batteries, and charges an arm and a leg for their use. Same for the NES MMC3 chips, and that's why new NES games don't use them, unless they're manufactured by Nintendo themselves.

FX chip games, same story. If Electro Brain releases Vortex in this country, expect a \$90-\$100 list. Because the game uses the Super FX2 chip, Nintendo charges big bucks for its use. That's why one (anonymous) company rep I spoke with at last year's Summer CES said that for one of their games, they decided to manufacture their own DSP, because use of Nintendo's chip, "would make the cost to the gamer a lot higher." So don't be expecting SFX chip games from licensees in the future, unless you want to pay for them. I'll bet Nintendo buys Vortex off Electro Brain. Just call it a hunch.

Not to say that Sega doesn't account for some of the blame on the soon-to-be video game crash of 1994. It would not be fair to say that Sega has been the "golden angel" that did

everything for the gamers. They, like Nintendo, are betting on your purchase of their system. It's crucial for them to have product, to compete with whatever Nintendo may announce.

Sega started losing credibility with the Sega VR, a great idea that was never to be. If a "toy" is going to immerse you in an experience, then it had better not be harmful to your health. Of course, such was not the case, and it's on hold at Sega. Of course, Nintendo has now announced their answer to Sega's VR. The Sega VR wasn't vaporware, they showed it off, and it was well received. But, you can't spread the Genesis market too thin. That's where total destruction lies.

Is the public scared of "virtual reality"? Did "The Lawnmower Man" give the public an idea that VR can actually be harmful. Will edutainment be a factor in VR software?

The fact is that consumers do not want VR, except the proud few who can actually afford it. Hey, maybe Nintendo's \$200 VR system will be on to something.

But if we have learned anything from the Senate hearings on video game violence, it is that the LAST THING they want is for kids across the country to be immersed in those awful video games. Imagine the shock when parents find out that their kids have murdered, slaughtered, and ravaged mutant civilizations with their own hands. If desensitizing is what you want, then please bring on the VR. But you'll be taking the rap from the government when Senator Lieberman comes knocking. So, where's Mortal VR?

Getting back to Sega, their CD-ROM drive is a perfect example of a great idea, put on store shelves. Whether or not it will last is questionable, but you can bet that Sega scored with gamers looking for interactive multimedia software on the high-end market.

Sega soon fell into a hardware rut. The Genesis is nearing its end, and the Super NES is gaining with programmers learning techniques to force performance. Sega is lagging behind. The only thing keeping them afloat is EA's sports games. Sega releases more than 10 games per year on all of their systems. It's something that no one else does.

Unfortunately, the Saturn was announced too soon, with Sega suddenly caught in a price question. Will we release the Saturn at \$399 and see how it sells and lower the price later or wait? The question's still

being pondered somewhere deep inside Sega's Redwood City offices.

Then there's the possibility that the Saturn will come in 3 forms: the full Saturn with CD and cartridge capabilities, the Jupiter, the cart-only 32-bitter, and the Jupiter CD, which would then turn the Jupiter into the Saturn. The Saturn is not a bad idea, and if Sega releases it, more power to them. It will cause too much consumer confusion to release it in too many forms. If anything, just release the Jupiter and call it the Saturn, and then release the CD upgrade as the Saturn CD.

Now comes the Super 32X. The competition heated up with Nintendo stressing better graphics and sound over speed, and Sega unable to throw stones back. The Super 32X and the SVP chip were the answer, allowing Sega to out-fox (so to speak) Nintendo's Starfox and also upgrade the Genesis to a pseudo-32-bit system.

If the Super 32X does well, it will be a miracle. At \$150, gamers will have to weigh the options. Wait for the Saturn which will be true 32-bit, or buy the 32X now and have to buy the Saturn later on. Is this a scheme to make sure competition from Atari and 3DO gets locked out?

If there's a company that shows the product to you, rather than announcing it and then hiding it in a cloak, it's Sega. The VR and Saturn are all widely known about, and gamers have seen pictures of these machines. That is one area where Nintendo has lacked.

If there are dead losers in the battle for a piece of the video game industry pie, it's those who expect multimedia systems to do well. The fact is, if you say to a customer, "this will change your life...it's a new way to learn...a new way to play games, and it'll be the tuner of the information superhighway," it's a question of at what cost to them. Unfortunately, most consumers will not pay over \$200 for the technology of the future. It's just not possible. That is probably why most companies who are producing or developing high end hardware are now doing it at a low price point, and, if possible, under \$200.

The Philips CD-I looks good, but it's too little, too late. The FMV cart weighs in at \$250, and the system is a separate \$300 (later this year). These two combined make the system not worth it, no matter how many infomercials they air late at night. The fact is that Philips pioneered a format that has been surpassed by

others. The 3DO eclipses the CD-I by a wide margin, so it's not even worth it anymore to look at Philips' great hardware.

The VIS from Tandy didn't go anywhere, and it's a classic example of why multimedia machines cannot move off of the shelves. People won't pay \$700 to learn about animals. They don't pay \$700 for their kids to go to high school, so why should they pay for an electronic teacher?

The answer to the multimedia question? Multimedia applications are best suited for computer CD-ROM. That's where the market is, and it's a cheaper, friendlier market if you find a deal.

I found that people who bought a 3DO for edutainment titles end up buying only games for the system. I talked to one 3DO owner who said that he was disappointed at the sparse flow of software and that there are currently not many educational titles. He also commented that the 3DO should've been shipped with an educational title AND Crash N' Burn, to get the best of both worlds. I guess 3DO says they are stressing edutainment titles, and then going in another direction.

While the 3DO is a multimedia machine, it cannot be grouped in the category with the rest of the load, because it really is a revolutionary item. With edutainment a selling point (although there aren't many titles yet), and games an afterthought, the 3DO is a sound investment in multimedia. Too bad no one will take the plunge at the high price point. If 3DO had wanted to revolutionize the industry, they should've released it as a computer add-on first, and then as a stand-alone version. It's compared to the Philips CD-I too often, although it is a nice piece of equipment.

I cannot say enough how the FMV cart will further split 3DO's already very small market. If you think 3DO owners (and prospective ones) will buy a \$250 FMV cart, you're in for a shock. First give us games for what we bought, then present us with a low-priced FMV add-on, please.

The LaserActive from Pioneer is a very good idea. I like it a lot, and if I had the cash, I'd go with this one. But, it's the highest priced of them all, and I just can't see paying MORE for the Sega Gen & CD add-on than I would if I bought the two machines separately. It's a good idea, but it never should have been released. It's just adding more confusion, as are all the new stand-alone multimedia machines.

If I could say one thing to companies, it's please stop bombarding us with new multimedia formats. You've got 3DO, stick with that. Make 3DO the CD drive standard, and all will be well. If the Jag CD had a cart to make it 3DO compatible, I'd be more likely to support the 3DO. It would double their market, and it would allow 3DO players to benefit from more titles released. Philips should close up shop soon, and the VIS is already pretty much gone.

The Atari Jaguar couldn't have been released at a better time, but it's taken a turn for the worse. The Jaguar is a great machine, just like the 3DO. But, with the current arena of announcement after announcement from the Big 2, the Jaguar may get shuffled in the deck.

If Atari is to succeed, they cannot bring out the CD-ROM drive this year. That's O.K., because it probably won't be released this year anyway. But Atari must ignore Nintendo and Sega's rumors and go for software, and that means securing MKII on the Jaguar. It's an all-out battle, and you must have this title to win, or at least survive.

If Atari does not get MKII, and does not attack Nintendo and Sega with great advertising, then they're dead. It'll be fatality, you're finished. But the likeliness of MKII on the Jag became greater with Williams Entertainment being formed.

There are losers though. Gamers will pick magazines, those who will survive long enough to become extremely popular and last. The magazines that survive will likely be those who get the news, rumors, tips, and screen shots first and report accurately.

If there is to be a proving ground, it will happen when EGM2 comes out. How the two mags will interact without overlapping is questionable, and others will follow if EGM2 is successful. The new video game magazines will have to absolutely cater to the readers, and give them what they want every single issue. And, they'll have to avoid taking a side on the system wars or hyping titles months before their release. Just what the magazines need now is another Xardion or Bubby to come along and ruin one of them.

The many new magazines slated for publication this year will have to be good, darn good. The mags will have to get bigger, and have to cover a lot more before it's over and done

with. The shakedown will leave maybe, three or four magazines standing. A word to the wise to those publishing conglomerates: look before you leap.

Video game licensing is becoming an all-too common trend. I don't think I ever remember actually playing a movie based title and enjoying it, except Aladdin. But I would like to see more time and effort put into these licenses if a company decides to make a game. I think that if Beavis & Butthead is released and really sucks, then it'll spell doom for the rest of the licensed gaming arena. I've never bought a game with a movie title (except for Aladdin), and unless companies realize that the license doesn't matter, I will never buy a licensed game title. Aladdin was so good because if it didn't feature any of the Disney characters or the music, it would be a great game. The animation and gameplay is so fluid. Please, more games like this, Dave Perry!

I feel that Game Fan's Dave Halverson was right on target in his May issue editorial which said a few words about movie game licensing. It's just a bad thing overall, and will eventually add to the death of the industry as it did in 1984 (ET, Raiders for the 2600), if it is not swiftly stopped. I don't care what is done, just NO MORE movie games.

Full-motion video games are also fluff. What I saw in FMV games was that I could play out a movie. I enjoyed Night Trap when I first bought the Sega CD because it was the only game available. Not to say that the new generation of FMV games aren't good, they're just not games. I personally enjoyed Tomcat Alley, as it was kind of fun once you got used to it, but it's no game.

If I were to choose, FMV or an original game that is a game, I would chose the game game. FMV costs millions of dollars, money better spent on an original title without FMV. Just think of the masterpieces that could be put out with Sega's development resources. Where's Ecco 2 CD? Now that's one game I want to see.

If full motion is to ever get really popular, there's got to be interaction. More than just point and click on an option or on a 'trap'. I want to see really good stuff. But, that's a long ways away.

The industry needs to focus itself, and get down to business and not mess around. I despise Nintendo for

stating that they only make games for kids, because they only see half of the picture. I don't necessarily praise Acclaim or Midway for Mortal Kombat either, but it is a game. I feel that good games are good games without blood, entrails, or otherwise. And the video game ratings system has gotten way too extreme.

My thoughts are that the video game ratings "board" that will soon be set up will be automatically biased. For one thing, take a group of parents, educators, psychiatrists, or other 'professionals' as stated in all the articles about the new board, and put them in a room with Mortal Kombat. They'll look at the blood, gore, maybe tap a few buttons, and then slap it with the harshest rating. Why doesn't someone put a gamer(s) on this board? Who will show them how to play the games? I've always wondered, and if the trend goes this way, the ratings system will ruin the industry.

Here's the deal: If the new ratings system is like Sega's VRC ("we'll give Lethal Enforcers an MA-17 rating because it's packed with a gun *gasp*, and give Castlevania Bloodlines with its crosses, blood, and possessed wolves and zombies a GA"), parents will lose faith, and stop paying attention to the ratings.

Then the government will complain that the system is not working and take the horse by the reins and start over again which CANNOT be done in this industry. It will cause consumer confusion, and parents won't know an adult rating from a kiddie rating. Then we'll end up with 4-year olds playing "Bikini Babes from Chernobyl" and 22-year olds playing "Barney's Mystical Wonderfun-land". That's just the thing to ruin the industry. The old Sega ratings system and the 3DO ratings are already causing consumer confusion, let's not botch up the next try, please?

Let's talk video game rentals. I think that they are a very good thing, since gamers can try out games for a relatively low price that they would never buy off store shelves. I feel that renting games helps the industry, because each video store that rents games buys at least one copy of the game, maybe more in the case of a popular title.

The Sega Channel is a bit overblown. I feel that the channel was a good idea in theory, but in practice, will it work? AT&T's got their Edge 16 modem ready to roll, and I think that Sega's overlooking a few things.

My Sega's not hooked up to a TV that has cable. In fact, I've got it on a monitor. So does that mean I'll have to move my Sega to an inconvenient location to subscribe to the channel?

Multiplayer games probably won't be a factor with the Sega Channel, whereas with the Edge, they will be. I'd like to see some kind of online service, not just a one-way Sega ad. I'd like to be able to get some gameplay help on a service too (while I'm playing maybe?). This won't be possible with the channel. For \$8.95 I'll get a catalog of 50 games, but who cares? What if all 50 games are ones I've played, rented, or own?

The preview idea is cool, but then people will still have to go buy the finished game.

Is Sega really thinking this through? I know many people who don't have cable. What will they do? It's splitting the audience way too thin. This is Sega's biggest mistake of all. If they segment their audience, then the last section won't sell as well. Example: Sega CD games that play only on machines with the 32X upgrade attached. That is moving towards alienating part of your market. Bad idea.

The industry should not retaliate against video stores who rent video games, because when you think about it, video games are less likely to be copied than VHS tapes are. Video tape rentals are big business, and if companies actually produce rental-only versions of their games (as EA did with Madden Champion Edition), then both parties would benefit.

I know lots of gamers who rent games, and I know a few who buy the games they rent. Sometimes I rent a game and then buy it later. I cannot see gamers buying more games if rentals are taken away. In fact, I see companies that don't have big-name titles going under, like HAL did after they sold NCAA Basketball to Nintendo. If NCAA Basketball had been released with HAL's name on it, it would not have done as well as it did under Nintendo's. Other companies would most certainly go under, like THQ, Data East, Jaleco, Taito, Koei...need I go on? Some great titles would be missed by many without the rental business.

If rentals are to be extinguished, then where will gamers turn to sample games? Sega's channel? Where you play the games for one month and you have to download from a TV with cable? I say that the Sega Channel, while it is a very good idea,

it is not plausible in today's market, where rentals are already established. I thank Nintendo for not announcing a similar channel venture, although there's still the possibility. I'd rather see a modem for any system than a channel.

Games are under a bad image. People don't see them as just pixilated board games, but as preparation for an actual killing. Video games are pixilated board games, plain and simple. Roll the dice, see if you survive. Video games are recreation, entertainment, and before the industry can really prosper, more people need to know that.

If more games are made with adults in mind, then maybe everyone will take a second look. Caesar's Palace for the Genesis and Super NES is a great example of an adult-oriented game that may pull in a few more people. How about more games made for the adult audience.

Once adult gamers play one or two games, they may rent other, different games to try out what's available. We may see a whole new generation of adult gamers. The 2600 generation is grown up now, and maybe they've been looking for games like they used to play on their old systems. Welcome them to the electronic gaming of the '90s with some more great games.

The idea of this article is to try to inform more people of the impending crash, and to warn the video game industry to stop continuing this madness of move-counter-move with every consumer electronics company in the world entering the race.

With so much rumor, speculation, and no evidence or photos of systems or tangible prototypes, we're looking at a dismal future. Please just give us the games, no more licensed titles, no more innuendo, and please, no more announcements that you're going to end up scrapping. The video game industry is at a very fragile point until these newcomers see that making a successful video game system is hard work.

A word to 3DO, Sony, Panasonic, and anyone else planning new systems this year: test the waters. Don't produce a system unless you're absolutely sure it will appeal to gamers and edutainment enthusiasts alike, and please try to lower the price as much as possible. This way, more gamers will be able to play your systems. Keep game prices low, entertainment software quality high.

ANOTHER ISSUE COME AND GONE...

So you've now read all the way through issue #16 of Paradox. If you like it, then please try to muster up some cash to purchase the next exciting issue. It's only \$1 for a single issue, and \$5 for 6 issues. That's a great deal as far as fanzine subscriptions go. Next month we'll have out SCES Survival Guide, more fanzine reviews, game reviews, and your responses to our gaming essays. Please write a letter of comment back. We want to hear from you. Don't forget to enter the Blockbuster Video Championships. Sign up this month to compete against your friends and enemies. More details in the next issue. Enter that Sub-Terrania contest we had last issue. It's pretty cool. So, until next time!



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